



Washington Biodiversity Council Achievements, 2005–2009

Biodiversity is an all-encompassing term to describe the variety of all life and natural processes on Earth.

Conserving biodiversity goes beyond saving rare species; it means we have healthy and diverse ecosystems that protect us from climate change, invasive species, and infectious diseases.

The Washington Biodiversity Council is a public-private partnership that addresses the links between human well-being and prosperity and the health of the natural world. Chartered to create and guide a 30-year strategy to advance biodiversity conservation in the state, the Council focuses its work in the following areas:

DEFINING PRIORITIES FOR CONSERVATION

The Council produced Conservation Opportunity maps to build agreement about which areas of the state are most biodiversity rich and which places are most at risk.

MAKING IT EASY FOR LANDOWNERS TO PRESERVE BIODIVERSITY

The Council has recognized—and lauded—the important stewardship efforts of private landowners from the outset, and it works to make conservation easy and profitable.

ENGAGING CITIZEN SCIENTISTS AND MEASURING PROGRESS

The Council has promoted citizens and scientists working together to contribute credible, cost-effective data that can help us know if conservation activities are making a difference.

MAKING SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION ACCESSIBLE

The Council has brought scientists together, consolidated data, and provided easy-to-access reports that address such questions as how climate change will affect species and ecosystems in our state.

INCORPORATING CONSERVATION INTO LOCAL PLANNING

The Council has made it easier for local decision-makers to manage biodiversity in ways that recognize its regional, national, and international importance.

EDUCATING KIDS AND ADULTS ABOUT BIODIVERSITY

The Council has developed tools to engage people in learning about their local ecology and how they can take care of Washington's biodiversity.

BUILDING BRIDGES AND LOOKING AHEAD

The Council has consistently sought listening opportunities to guide its efforts and to address how conservation of Washington's biodiversity can best be led and monitored.



“From the start, the Washington Biodiversity Council has seen the need for healthy lands containing both wild areas and working farms and ranches.”

—Wade Troutman,
fourth generation wheat
farmer and former
Biodiversity Council
member

“The Washington Biodiversity Conservation Strategy recognizes that expanding incentives and market-based programs for private landowners can make voluntary stewardship and conservation practical and rewarding.”

—Ron Shultz,
Director of Policy & Inter
Governmental Relations,
Washington State
Conservation Commission

Defining Priorities for Conservation

The Washington Biodiversity Council produced **Conservation Opportunity maps**, a product that has been adopted—and adapted—by groups across the state. The maps integrated data on species and habitats from multiple sources and showed which areas of high biodiversity are most at risk.

- Land use planners in **North Central Washington** added different types of information, such as zoned land use categories and urban growth area boundaries, to tailor the maps to their local needs.
- The **Bainbridge Island Open Space Study** used the maps to identify areas with a high biological richness as well as those at risk of being lost due to development.
- The **Puget Sound Partnership’s Watershed Characterization Project** is adapting the maps to guide better land-use decisions by prioritizing sub-watersheds for protection, restoration, and development.
- The **Pacific Biodiversity Institute** has incorporated the map data into a tool for the private forest landowner members of the **Northwest Natural Resource Group**.

Making it Easy for Landowners to Preserve Biodiversity

The Council hosted the **Washington Forum for Conservation Incentives**, a filled-to-capacity event that raised the profile of landowner stewardship incentive programs.

- The Forum built on a Council report assessing **Conservation Incentive Programs in Washington State**.
- The **Washington Conservation Incentives listserv**, with over 200 subscribers, grew out of the Forum.
- The **Healthy Lands Initiative**, a Council pilot project, **provided more than 300 people** with its analysis of available conservation incentives.
- The **Habitat Farming Work Group** analyzed how to pay farmers for growing riparian habitat.
- Two **Grass-Banking Work Groups** identified strategies for and barriers to public-private grass-banks in Chelan, Douglas, and Okanogan counties.



Engaging Citizen Scientists and Measuring Progress

The Council has piloted cutting-edge efforts to partner students and volunteers with scientists to assess conservation progress and biodiversity trends.

- The Pierce County Biodiversity Alliance used a **BioBlitz**—a rapid biodiversity inventory—to kick off **community stewardship planning** along the lower White River. The 24-hour BioBlitz, with over 100 participants, recorded nearly 600 observations of plants and animals.
- The Initiative for Rural Innovation and Stewardship has started a **network of photo-monitoring trails** in North Central Washington. A companion Web site lets people record their own photos and observations about change in the landscape.
- The Council created the first phase of a **Biodiversity Scorecard**, a sophisticated assessment tool that encompasses 30 indicators for monitoring the health of the state's biodiversity and the effectiveness of conservation actions.
- The Council brings a statewide perspective to the newly-formed **Citizen Science Collaborative**, joining with others to advance this means of engaging people and collecting cost-effective data.

Making Scientific Information Accessible

From the Conservation Opportunity maps and the Biodiversity Scorecard to online feature stories, the Washington Biodiversity Council **consistently provides accessible information** to help people understand the importance of biodiversity. Among the Council's reports:

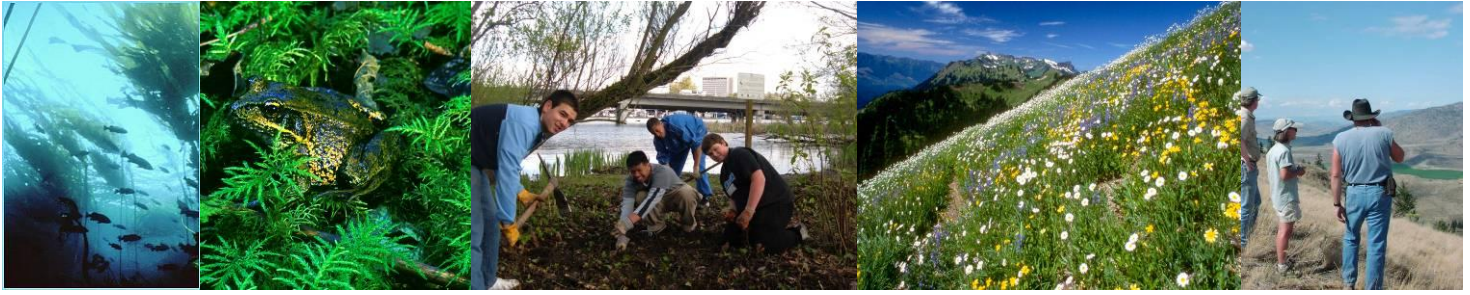
- **Climate Change and the Future of Biodiversity in Washington**, the first such study published for the state, assesses existing data on the impacts of climate change to species, ecosystems, and landscapes.
- **Washington's Biodiversity: Status and Threats** is the first comprehensive report that compiles and consolidates data about the quality and quantity of plant communities and wildlife in Washington.
- The **Washington Biodiversity Conservation Strategy**, published in 2007, is a comprehensive guide to the most important actions for conserving biodiversity statewide—now and for years to come.

"The many goods and services we receive from our natural ecosystems are produced by the interactions of the many species that live in them. If we do not maintain that rich biodiversity, the quality of human life and the state's economic vitality are certain to decline."

—Gordon Orians,
Professor Emeritus of
Zoology, University of
Washington

"The importance of strategies for preserving biodiversity will only increase as we face the challenges brought on by a warming climate."

—W. Spencer Reeder,
Lead Policy Strategist,
Climate Change,
Washington State
Department of Ecology



"The economic health of our communities cannot be assured without protecting the lands and waters that we depend on. The Washington Biodiversity Conservation Strategy offers a way to bring everyone together to protect our natural heritage and enable us to thrive."

—Karen Anderson,
Washington State
Director, The Nature
Conservancy

Incorporating Conservation into Local Planning

The Washington Biodiversity Council has partnered with local governments to explore home-grown solutions and incorporate best practices into planning.

- The Pierce County Biodiversity Alliance has found that participation from several jurisdictions and areas of expertise is key to its **biodiversity stewardship planning efforts**.
- The Initiative for Rural Innovation and Stewardship convened local and regional planners to create a **locally-relevant conservation opportunity map** in Douglas, Chelan, and Okanogan counties.

Educating Kids and Adults about Biodiversity

Projects sponsored by the Washington Biodiversity Council have developed tools that engage people in learning about their local surroundings.

- The **Nature of North Central Washington** video explores the riches of that diverse part of the state.
- The **Biodiversity Schoolyard Report** gets students exploring their immediate environment.
- The **Biodiversity Project Web site**, developed and maintained by the Council, contains feature stories, news, and a calendar.
- The video, **Washington's Biodiversity: Celebrating the Richness of Life**, gives a colorful overview of why biodiversity matters to our state.

Building Bridges and Looking Ahead

The Council's inclusive and pro-active approach reaches out to divergent sectors.

- In North Central Washington, **roundtables, focus groups, interviews, and listening sessions** have helped that community develop a regional approach to biodiversity conservation.
- The Habitat Connectivity Strategic Communications Project surveyed and interviewed individuals to **enhance community engagement in an initiative to map wildlife corridors across the state**.

At the request of Governor Gregoire, the Washington Biodiversity Council produced a **Leadership Strategy: Recommendations for State Leadership to Sustain Washington's Biodiversity Heritage**. A central deliverable of Executive Order 08-02, the report concluded that the state has much to gain from advancing the Washington Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and recommended that a permanent public-private partnership be established to guide that implementation.